

## CHAPTER 4 DAILY PRACTICES FOR MEETING SMI NUTRITION GOALS FOR ALL MENU PLANNING APPROACHES

SFAs/schools can achieve the nutrition goals of the SMI by building into their foodservice operations simple daily practices that will provide children with the nutrients required for building healthy bodies. These daily practices involve important parts of your foodservice operation – menu planning, food purchasing, food preparation, and service. These practices are based on principles that will move your SFA/schools toward meeting the nutrition standards—regardless of your menu-planning approach.

Let's discuss some practices that schools can implement to meet the nutrient targets and *Dietary Guideline* recommendations.

### Menu Planning for Healthy School Meals

Regardless of the menu planning approach you have chosen, certain steps will help you plan healthier meals. The goal is to plan, prepare and serve healthy, nutritious meals that children will not only select but also consume. Establishing lifelong eating habits is critical for children. School meals can serve as an important learning laboratory for modeling the kinds of foods that children should choose each day.

The **menu** is the first step. As you have heard repeatedly throughout your foodservice career, the menu is the driving force for all foodservice program activities—including the nutritional contribution. The menu determines the nutrient content of the meal and the acceptability—the acceptability influences the participation rate.

The menu also provides an excellent opportunity for nutrition education. The cafeteria can be a classroom link for nutrition education where children are provided the opportunity to learn to make healthy choices.

You already know that the meals must be planned to be in compliance with federal regulations and program requirements for them to be claimed for reimbursement.

- If you are planning your menus with one of the food-based menu planning approaches, you will need to ensure that all required components and portion sizes are met.
- If you plan menus using one of the nutrient-based menu planning approaches, you will need to ensure that the menus contain the menu items required and the nutrient content of the meals, when averaged over a school week, meet the nutrient standards for the age/grade groups being used.

## Providing Menu Choices

Providing menu choices is important to allow students to select foods they like. Choices help maintain high participation when planning menus, and choices facilitate offering new foods for which children may not have learned to develop a preference. Letting students “take a taste” of a new menu offering is the ideal way to introduce a wider variety of menu selections. Offering choices at sites where Offer Versus Serve is in place encourages students to select foods they intend to eat.

The number of choices you offer in each category depends on your own foodservice operation. Look for a balance in cost, nutrients, and equipment usage, as well as the labor and skills needed to prepare each item.

**Key:** Regardless of the menu planning approach you are using, menus must meet the nutrient standards.

## Developing Cycle Menus

Cycle menus are menus that are developed for a certain length of time and repeated on a periodic basis. For example, menus can be planned for four weeks and repeated during the school year. There is no time requirement, so the length of the cycle depends on the school district’s preference.

Using cycle menus developed for breakfast and lunch for any of the menu planning approaches will save time and increase efficiency.

- Cycle menus can save time by allowing you to plan basic menus—by meal patterns or by nutrient analysis—only once during the school year.
- Cycle menus, because they are repeated on a periodic basis, save time for your foodservice staff, by allowing them to become familiar and efficient with the food production routine.
- Cycle menus save time in procurement, since the same food items are repeated on a cyclic rotation.
- Lastly, cycle menus can save time for SFAs/schools using the nutrient-based approach to menu planning, saving time for data entry and nutrient analysis.

SFAs may vary in the way they implement cycle menus. Some repeat the same set of menus every four weeks or so, but some may have different sets of cycle menus for each season of the year. Other SFAs, especially those that do a lot of onsite preparation, may establish a basic number of menus and then vary or switch the scheduling of the individual menus—depending on the day of the week and the amount of pre-preparation required. For NSMP/ANSMP, menus may be varied within the analyzed week, but may not be switched from one week to another without reanalyzing.

For example, some SFAs number each menu and then switch them according to the day of the school week. Cycle menu #5 may never be scheduled on the first day of a school week or following a holiday because this menu requires pre-preparation, such as thawing of bulk ground beef.

The next several pages will provide “best practices” for your foodservice operation—with the goal of meeting the SMI nutrition standards. All of these “best practices” are included in the Appendices, and on an additional CD ROM, for you to reproduce, modify, and use as another SMI training tool for your schools

## **Menu-Planning Practices for Healthy School Meals**

### **Increase the Variety of Entrees Offered.**

- ✓ Plan more school-prepared items and/or look for new commercially prepared products to increase variety.
- ✓ Choose more low-fat, low-sodium products.
- ✓ Use low-fat cheeses, dairy products, and lower fat meats.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of offering entrée salads or a salad bar.

*Where choices are not offered, limit processed meats/meat alternates that have not been modified to reduce fat and/or sodium to once a week.*

### **Plan More Fresh Fruits and Vegetables On Your Menu Each Day.**

- ✓ Increase the amounts and variety of fruits and vegetables offered because fruits and vegetables differ in nutrient content.
- ✓ Offer a vitamin A-rich vegetable or fruit three to four times a week.
- ✓ Plan a vitamin C-rich vegetable or fruit three to four times a week, and include them frequently for breakfast.
- ✓ Offer cut-up fruit or dried fruit as a topping for yogurt.
- ✓ Offer fruit with more potassium often, such as bananas, prunes, prune juice, dried peaches, dried apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, oranges, and orange juice.
- ✓ Offer fruit often as snacks if you provide reimbursable snacks for an afterschool program.
- ✓ Frequently offer fresh vegetable salads or fresh vegetables with a lowfat dip such as lowfat salad dressings, yogurt, or hummus.
- ✓ Offer cut-up fruit or dried fruit as a topping for yogurt.
- ✓ Frequently offer fresh fruits using a variety of presentations, such as orange smiles, apple wedges, fresh fruit cups, red and green grape combos, and banana halves.

### **Plan At Least One Menu Item Containing a Whole Grain Each Day.**

- ✓ Plan a variety of breads and bread alternates such as whole-wheat breads, multigrain breads, brown bread, and brown rice.
- ✓ Increase the variety of whole grain cooked and ready-to-eat cereals offered at breakfast.

- ✓ Offer school-baked bread, replacing some of the white flour with whole wheat flour. Begin slowly by replacing one-third of the white flour with whole wheat and gradually increasing until at least half and half. More leavening ingredients may be required as percentage of whole grain flour increases.

### **Plan At Least One Serving of Cooked Dried Beans or Peas Each Week.**

- ✓ Offer more cooked dried beans and peas.
- ✓ Explore the great variety available such as black beans, Great Northern beans, red kidney beans, lima beans (mature), Navy beans, pinto beans, black-eyed peas, lentils, split peas, and garbanzo beans (also called chick peas), all of which can be offered in salad bars; as a vegetable such as Boston baked beans; made into soups; served as *frijoles* with Mexican food menu items; served as beans and rice in some parts of the country; and red kidney beans or pinto beans can even be ground and added to chili as part of the meat/meat alternate component. Beans can be ground and added to chili if children find whole beans unacceptable. Garbanzo or chickpeas can be made into hummus for a vegetable dipper.

### **Offer As Many Healthy Alternate Choices As Your Operation Allows.**

- ✓ In high schools, offer baked potatoes in addition to French fries.
- ✓ Offer lowfat sour cream, lowfat or fat-free yogurt for a topping in place of sour cream.
- ✓ Offer lowfat salad dressings in addition to regular salad dressing.

### **Where Choices Are Not Offered, Offer No More Than One High-Fat Menu Item Per Meal.**

### **Before Placing New Food Products On Your Menus, Obtain Nutrition Information About the Item.**

- ✓ Check for type(s) and quantity of fat and the amounts of sodium and/or sugar in the item.

### **Offer and Promote Unflavored Fat-Free or Unflavored 1 Percent Lowfat Milk At Each Meal.**

- ✓ If flavored milk, such as chocolate or strawberry milk is offered, use only 1 percent lowfat or fat-free.

Menu Planning Practices for Healthy School Meals can also be found in Appendix N in a reproducible format.
--

## Purchasing Practices for Healthy School Meals

Collect and compare nutrition information about all food products you purchase for your schools—search for products that are nutritious and appealing to students, but also meet your labor, equipment, and cost needs.

### Milk and Dairy Products

- ✓ Purchase lowfat and/or fat-free fluid milk fortified with vitamins A and D.
- ✓ Purchase lowfat or fat-free yogurt fortified with vitamins A and D.
- ✓ Whole milk may contain either 3.3 percent or 3.7 percent fat. Know the percent of fat in the milk you purchase.
- ✓ Purchase lowfat cheeses such as part-skim mozzarella, and other lowfat or fat-free dairy products.
- ✓ Purchase ice cream less frequently. Offer ice milk, sherbet, lowfat or fat-free frozen yogurt, or frozen fruit juice bars [(not frozen *fruit-flavored* bars, which are Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV))].

### Identifying Fat Levels in Milk Products - What's on the Label?

Starting January 1, 1998, the labeling of fat-reduced milk products was required to follow the same requirements the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had established earlier for the labeling of many reduced fat foods.

- 2-percent milk is now known as "reduced fat" instead of "lowfat."
- 1-percent milk remains "lowfat."
- Fat-free milk is also known as skim, zero-fat, or nonfat milk.

A chart indicating the grams of fat in each type of milk is included in Appendix O.

The changes do not affect the labeling of lower fat yogurt products. These products are now bound by the "general standard" for nutritionally modified standardized foods. This means the nutrients that lower fat milk products provide, other than fat, must be at least equal to nutrients in full-fat milk, before vitamins A and D are added.

The goal of the labeling changes was to help consumers select milk products that can help them lower their fat and saturated fat intakes to recommended levels.

### Example of How Lowfat Milk Reduces Saturated Fat

Serving lowfat milk that is 1 percent and below is an easy way to lower fat intake, especially saturated fat—it doesn't take a lot of time and no preparation skills are needed. A report<sup>2</sup> of a school intervention in an inner city, primarily Latino, school district in the city of New York involved switching from whole milk to 1-percent lowfat milk in six elementary school cafeterias. Based on the results of this switch, a 25-percent reduction in calories from saturated fat occurred, with no other dietary changes.

## **Condiments**

- ✓ Purchase reduced-fat/reduced-sodium salad dressings and mayonnaise, as appropriate, or make your own using less oil and salt. Allow students to taste-test these products for acceptability prior to purchase.

## **Meat/Meat Alternates and Entrées**

- ✓ Purchase reduced-fat/reduced-sodium meats and meat alternates when available.
- ✓ Purchase ground poultry (without skin—approximately 11 percent fat) to mix 50-50 with lean ground beef.
- ✓ Purchase cold cuts, deli meats, and hot dogs with no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce.
- ✓ Purchase water-packed tuna fish instead of oil-packed.
- ✓ Limit the purchase of convenience items that are prefried in fat during processing.
- ✓ Taste-test lower-fat, lower-sodium convenience items prior to purchasing. Ask students, faculty, and foodservice staff to participate in the taste testing to identify acceptable products.
- ✓ Require vendors to provide nutrition information for all products purchased. Use this information to compare nutrient information on various products to determine if lower-fat items would be acceptable.

## **Fruits and Vegetables**

- ✓ Purchase fruits canned in light syrup or natural fruit juices instead of heavy syrup.
- ✓ Purchase fresh fruits, where feasible, to substitute for canned fruits.
- ✓ Purchase fresh and frozen vegetables, where feasible, to substitute for canned vegetables, which are high in sodium.
- ✓ Purchase oven-ready fries, instead of fries for deep-fat frying. Check and compare the fat content of the oven-ready fries to the deep-fat frying fries. Many times, the oven-ready fries have been processed with a coating of oil to make them brown, resulting in a high fat content.

## **Oils and Fats**

- ✓ Purchase items that have been prepared/processed with unsaturated vegetable oils. Avoid products made with coconut or palm oils.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wechsler, H, Basch, C, Zybert, P and Shea, S. Promoting the selection of lowfat milk in elementary school cafeterias in an inner-city Latino community: evaluation of an intervention. Amer J of Public Health. 88:3, 1998, pp. 427-433

- ✓ Purchase polyunsaturated and/or monounsaturated oils, such as canola, corn, cottonseed, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, or sunflower oils.
- ✓ Do not purchase lard.
- ✓ For highest polyunsaturation, purchase margarines where the first ingredient is a liquid oil, e.g., liquid corn oil.
- ✓ Avoid hydrogenated oils/fats, which contain trans fats.
  - A label with hydrogenated oil among its ingredients has increased saturation and trans fats over the liquid counterpart, e.g., partially hydrogenated soybean oil.
  - Soft “tub style” margarines are less hydrogenated (less saturated) than stick margarines.
  - Purchase margarines that are “trans fat” free.

*Refer to Appendix P for a discussion on the types and examples of dietary fats.*

## **Grains and Breads**

- ✓ Specify whole-grain as the primary ingredient or purchase a product that contains at least 30 percent whole-grain flour when purchasing breads, buns and crackers.
- ✓ If schools bake their own breads, gradually increase the amount of whole wheat flour in the basic roll or bread recipe. Start with 1/3 whole wheat flour, then gradually increase from school year to school year as acceptability increases.

## **Seasonings**

- ✓ Purchase garlic, onion, and celery powders or granules, not garlic onion or celery salts, which have more sodium.
- ✓ Purchase seasoning mixes that do not contain monosodium glutamate (MSG) or where salt is the primary ingredient.

Refer to the SMI Resource section of this manual to locate the two school foodservice purchasing references, *Choice Plus: A Reference for Foods and Ingredients* and *First Choice: A Purchasing Systems Manual for School Food Service*.

These Purchasing Practices for Healthy School Meals can also be found in Appendix Q in a reproducible format.

## **Food Preparation Practices for Healthy School Meals**

Train all foodservice staff in food preparation techniques that guarantee food quality, limit calories from fat, and keep sodium in moderation while providing the calories and nutrients that children need to develop healthy bodies and minds.

## **To Reduce Fat**

- ✓ Trim visible fat from raw meats before cooking.
- ✓ Cook meat on a rack or drain fat from cooked meat (put in colander to drain or use a meat baster to remove fat).
- ✓ Chill meats, meat drippings, soups, stews, and sauces, when appropriate, so fats will solidify and can be easily removed.
- ✓ Limit deep-fat and pan frying; bake, broil or steam foods instead. When using precooked breaded meats, poultry, or fish, oven bake instead of frying them.
- ✓ When deep-fat fried foods are offered, select an unsaturated fat and carefully follow correct temperature, time and draining procedures.
- ✓ Modify recipes by reducing the amount of butter, margarine, oil or shortening called for in the recipe, as appropriate. Reduce amounts of butter/margarine used for seasoning; do not use bacon grease, lard, or salt pork.
- ✓ Use non-stick cooking spray or parchment paper to reduce the amount of fat needed to prevent baked products from sticking.
- ✓ When serving fried fish or fried potatoes, offer lowfat condiments (e.g., lemon wedges, malt vinegar, catsup, sweet and sour sauce) instead of tartar sauce or other high-fat sauces.
- ✓ Use fat-free or nonfat dry milk in place of whole milk or cream in recipes when possible. Use lowfat plain yogurt instead of sour cream.
- ✓ In preparing items such as potato salad, carrot-raisin salad, chicken salad, etc., replace a portion of the mayonnaise-type salad dressing with plain, lowfat or nonfat yogurt.
- ✓ Reduce the amount of salad dressing you use on tossed or mixed salad.

## **To Reduce Salt Or Sodium To A Moderate Level**

- ✓ Modify recipes by reducing the amount of salt, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and other salty condiments as appropriate. Omit monosodium glutamate (MSG) from recipes.
- ✓ Do not add salt to canned vegetables.
- ✓ Only lightly salt fresh and frozen vegetables and entrees. Gradually reduce the amount of salt.
- ✓ Experiment with herbs, spices, and lemon for seasonings to use in place of part of the salt.
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate the salt in the cooking water when cooking rice or pasta if these foods will be served with a sauce or gravy or in a casserole.

## **To Increase Fiber**

- ✓ Leave edible peels/skins on fruits and vegetables (e.g., use unpeeled apple in salads and fruit cups, leave potatoes unpeeled) for added fiber.
- ✓ Add whole wheat flour to baked items such as rolls, cookies, etc.



## To Retain Nutrients

- ✓ Steam vegetables in small batches until only tender-crisp. Do not hold longer than 20 minutes to retain nutrients, flavor, and color.

## To Maintain Quality and Consistency in Food

### Develop And Use Standardized Recipes

The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that:

- Is tried, adapted and retried several times for use by a given foodservice operation.
- Produces the **same** good results and yield every time:
  - Using the same preparation procedures,
  - Using the same type of equipment, and
  - Using the same quantity and quality of ingredients.

You should use standardized recipes for many important reasons. They:

- ✓ Provide the same consistent product every time you prepare them.
- ✓ Control food cost since there is no overproduction of food.
- ✓ Increase productivity, saving time for you and your staff.
- ✓ Increase customer satisfaction because they know they can depend on being served a consistently high quality product each time.

**Key:** Every recipe that you use in your kitchens must be standardized. This includes all recipes that have more than one ingredient.

For example, you may think that a simple product like cinnamon toast does not need a recipe. However, this item includes bread, fat, sugar and cinnamon, which must be measured every time to ensure that the end product always yields:

- Consistent and measurable results,
- Consistent nutrient content, and
- Necessary food components and portion sizes to contribute toward a reimbursable meal.

### Ensure That Standardized Recipes Are Used

You, as the foodservice director, supervisor, or manager, should review the actual recipes that the foodservice staff is using while monitoring your site. Are all schools using the SFA's standardized recipes? It is necessary to observe the day's production from beginning to end. This means to be at the site before food production is started and stay until the food is served and leftovers are counted.

Allow the foodservice staff necessary time to discuss daily procedures. Staff may fall into incorrect habits without realizing it. Group discussions are a perfect opportunity to find better ways to accomplish a task. Always be willing to listen to what staff members have to offer.

Here are a few suggestions to help you monitor more efficiently.

- ✓ Determine if the correct recipe is being used that was planned for the menu.
- ✓ Examine the ingredients that have been used to ensure that the recipe is prepared as planned.
- ✓ Check the quantity or yield that was prepared for the site.
- ✓ Determine if there are leftovers and the reason for overproduction.
- ✓ Observe portioning to ensure the correct serving utensil is used.
- ✓ Examine the kitchen setting and equipment needed to prepare the recipe.
- ✓ Make “follows standardized recipes” one of the criteria for performance evaluation. This indicates the SFA’s priorities.

**Tip:** Identify a prepared food or menu item each month for school staff to bring in and review at the monthly managers’ meeting. Set up a “blind” scoring process where all managers score and select the best product. Recognize the school that prepares the best food item and consider allowing the cook/baker from that school to visit other schools as a trainer. Recognition is a powerful employee motivator!

For more detailed information on standardized recipes, please refer to the NFSMI’s *Measuring Success with Standardized Recipes*, described in the SMI Resources section.

The Food Preparation Practices for Healthy School Meals can also be found in Appendix R in a reproducible format.

## **Meal Service Practices for Healthy School Meals**

- Work with the school superintendent, principal, PTA or PTO, and/or other appropriate groups to ensure that students have sufficient time to select and consume a healthful meal.
- Ensure that lowfat and fat-free milk are available throughout the entire lunch period.
- Check the temperature of milk to make sure it’s cold all through meal service and acceptable to students.
- Place fat-free and lowfat milks toward the front of the milk cabinet to promote their selection.
- Merchandise foods to encourage consumption of lowfat menu items.
- If a la carte food items are sold, make sure they are reflective of the goals of SMI, i.e., that healthy choices are offered.
- Steam vegetables only until tender crisp.
- Offer meals that incorporate principles of good menu planning, including variety and a good balance of colors, shapes, textures, temperatures, and flavors.

- Plan attractive garnishes for steam table pans or individual pre-portioned foods.
- To ensure student appeal, conduct student taste tests of new recipes and commercially prepared food products.

## **Ideas for Program Promotion and Improvement**

- Promote healthful meal choices in menus and on the serving line.
- Model good eating habits and a positive attitude toward healthy foods.
- Promote good nutrition to teachers and school staff and enlist their support in modeling positive attitudes toward healthy eating.
- Provide nutrition education to students, parents, teachers, and/or food service staff, as appropriate.
- Include nutrition information on menus sent home to parents.

The Meal Service Practices for Healthy School Meals can also be found in Appendix S in a reproducible format.

## **Portion Control for Healthy School Meals**

Portion control is another key to serving healthy school meals and teaching children how to recognize adequate servings of food. All foods fit into a healthy eating plan, but an excess amount of any one food can turn healthy into unhealthy. With the prevalence of oversized portions at many restaurants and fast food establishments, children need to learn to recognize an appropriate portion size for their age.

Portion control is important throughout the child nutrition setting. It involves careful planning, purchasing, meal preparation, and meal service.

Portion control contributes to an effective child nutrition operation because it:

- Provides the correct serving size to meet the nutritional needs and/or the USDA meal pattern/menu structure requirements.
- Helps to control costs.
- Minimizes waste and overproduction. Numerous and/or frequent leftovers can invalidate even the best nutrient analysis.
- Guides the ordering and preparation of food.
- Gives a consistent yield.
- Ensures each student receives the same portion—important for customer satisfaction.
- Ensures consistent nutritional contributions to the meals.

## **Training for Portion Control**

A foodservice director must continually train the foodservice staff on the importance of serving the proper portion to each child.

**1. The first step to proper portion control is to ensure that all kitchens are equipped with the right tools and to know which tools to use for each product.** Every kitchen should contain the following tools to ensure proper portioning:

- ✓ Ounce and pound scales for weighing meats and cheeses.
- ✓ Various sized scoops or dishers for mashed potatoes, desserts, etc.
- ✓ Solid and perforated, standardized measuring-portion servers for serving fruits (solid) and vegetables (perforated).
- ✓ Various sized ladles for liquid foods such as soups, gravies, etc.

**2. Another important step is to train the foodservice staff to identify, prepare, and serve the correct portions.**

- ✓ They must be trained to portion food or menu items correctly during preparation of foods, such as weighing out the correct portion sizes of meats and cheese for individual salads and sandwiches.
- ✓ In addition, they must be trained to identify and use the correct size serving utensil on the serving line. For example, use a “Number 8” scoop to serve a ½ cup portion of a vegetable.

## **A La Carte Sales That Promote Healthy Choices**

USDA studies<sup>9</sup> indicate that students who participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) receive better dietary intakes than students who participate in neither program. As administrator or managers of the NSLP and SBP for your SFA or school, your primary responsibility is to promote these programs—not a la carte sales.

If you have made the decision to offer a la carte sales, practice the same nutrition integrity<sup>10</sup> with the choices of a la carte sales available to students as with reimbursable meals. The key to healthy school foods is to practice variety, moderation and balance. No single food supplies all the necessary nutrients. Additional foods offered for sale should enhance the menu by providing variety as well as optimizing the nutritional intake. Avoid serving the same high-fat and/or high sodium a la carte items on a daily basis, such as pizza, French fries, and hamburgers.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation, *Changes in Children's Diets: 1989-1991 to 1994-1996*, CN-01-CD2, by Phil Gleason and Carol Suitor. Alexandria, VA: 2001. Available online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/default.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> The School Nutrition Association (formerly the American School Food Service Association) and the American Dietetic Association define nutrition integrity as “a level of performance that assures all food and beverages available in schools are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and when combined with nutrition education and a healthy school environment contributes to enhanced learning and the development of lifelong, healthy eating habits.”

Here are some suggestions for planning healthier a la carte items.

- ✓ Try offering fresh fruit or vegetable a la carte choices.
- ✓ Offer fresh baked breads (containing whole wheat flour) in baskets with lowfat cheese and some fresh vegetables.
- ✓ Provide sandwich plates with a vegetable or fruit salad.
- ✓ Sell individual bags of raw vegetables and dips.
- ✓ Sell plain bottled water as a supplemental beverage rather than sugar-added drinks.

## **Food Safety and Sanitation Practices for Healthy School Meals**

Having food that is safe to eat is a vital part of healthy eating. It is so important that food safety is now part of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In addition, Federal law now requires that every School Food Authority (SFA) shall implement a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-based school food safety program in the preparation and service of each meal served to children. The SFA must ensure that only safe food of the highest quality is served to children.

For assistance in developing a HACCP school food safety program, refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP Principles*. This document serves as USDA guidance for the implementation of HACCP-based food safety programs in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP). It identifies the minimum elements of Standard Operating Procedures and temperature controls that must be included in a food safety program based on HACCP principles.

Another excellent reference for establishing food safety practices is the National Food Service Management Institute's *Serving It Safe, Second Edition*.

To obtain these manuals, refer to the list of SMI Resources located after Chapter 6.

Below are examples of some foodservice areas and practices that SFAs should incorporate into their school food safety program.

### **Purchasing**

- Buy from reputable vendors
- Include food safety standards in purchasing agreement
- Accept foods only if delivered at proper temperatures in clean, well-equipped trucks

## **Receiving**

- Inspect foods upon arrival for proper temperature, content damage, and insect infestation
- Reject all products that do not meet requirements
- Store foods immediately
- Keep receiving area clean

## **Storing**

- Label food with description and delivery date
- Use oldest foods first
- Avoid cross-contamination
- Store chemicals away from foods and other food-related supplies
- Maintain proper refrigerator, freezer, and dry storage temperatures

## **Preparing**

- Avoid cross-contamination
- Keep foods out of temperature “danger zone” (41°F-135 °F)
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables in potable, running water – never in standing water
- Thaw foods properly
- Prepare foods no further in advance than necessary

## **Cooking**

- Avoid cross-contamination
- Cook foods to the proper internal temperature for the appropriate time without interruptions
- Record internal temperatures of food
- Use a clean food thermometer when taking food temperatures
- Thaw foods properly

## **Serving and Holding**

- Avoid cross-contamination
- Hold foods at the proper temperature – below 41°F and above 135 °F to keep out of the “danger zone” (41°F-135 °F)

- Record internal temperatures of food

## **Cooling**

- Chill rapidly
- Stir frequently while cooling
- Use shallow, pre-chilled pans or other safe chilling methods
- Record internal temperatures of foods
- Store appropriately

## **Reheating**

- Reheat rapidly
- Reheat to an internal temperature of 165 °F for 15 seconds
- Record internal temperatures of food
- Use a clean food thermometer when taking food temperatures
- Never reheat food in hot-holding equipment

## **Maintaining a Safe and Sanitary Foodservice Facility**

- Follow rules for good personal hygiene
- Wash hands frequently, properly, and at appropriate times
- Clean and sanitize facility and equipment regularly
- Keep facility and food items free of pest infestation

## **Using Practice-Based Strategies to Meet Nutrition Standards**

SFAs that do not have the capabilities or resources to conduct a nutrient analysis often have to rely on the State agency's nutrient analysis of one week's menus to determine if they are meeting the SMI nutrition standards and then adjust their menus as needed.

If you are not analyzing your own menus—or even if you are—you can incorporate these practices into daily operations to ensure your school meals provide the necessary nutrients and calories, and make a giant leap in meeting the SMI nutrition goals—and most importantly—students will benefit from being offered a variety of nutritious foods.

## **Commitment and Training**

When everyone on the school foodservice team commits to working together in providing healthy school meals, the SFA/school will have increased confidence that meals offered to students will meet the SMI nutrition goals. The school foodservice practices listed in this chapter were provided to guide foodservice staff in planning menus, purchasing food products, and preparing meals that will meet the SMI nutrition goals—even before nutrient analysis is conducted by the district or State agency.

These recommended practices are included, in reproducible form, in the Appendices to enable foodservice directors/supervisors to duplicate or adapt them for continuous staff training.